

THE FOLK OF THE FARAWAY TREE

By Enid Blyton

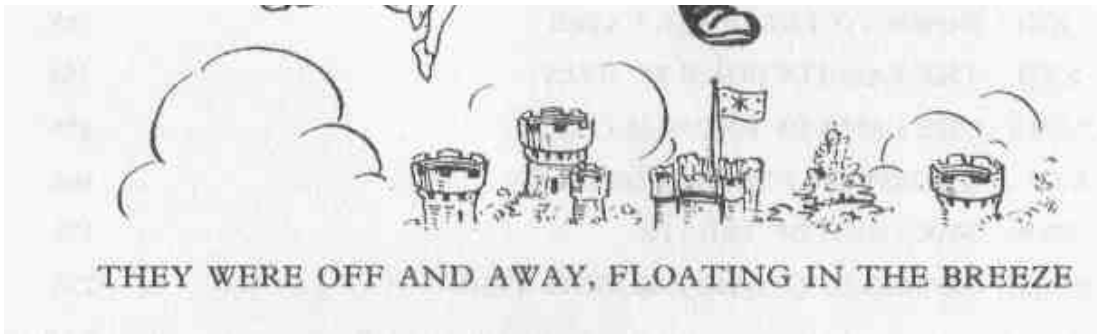


Faraway Tree 3

The Folk of the Faraway Tree

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THEY WERE OFF AND AWAY, FLOATING IN THE BREEZE

I

Curious Connie Comes to Stay

One day Mother came to the three children, as they worked out in the garden, and spoke to them.

"Jo! Bessie! Fanny! Listen to me for a minute. I've just had a letter from an old friend of mine, and I am wondering what to do about it. I'll read it to you."

Mother read the letter:

"DEAR OLD FRIEND,

"Please will you do something for me? I have not been well for some time, and the doctor says I must go away on a long holiday. But, as you know, I have a little girl, Connie, and I cannot leave her by herself. So would you please let her stay with you until I come back? I will, of course, pay you well. Your three children are good and well-behaved, and I feel that their friendship will be very nice for my little Connie, who is, I am afraid, rather spoilt: Do let me know soon.

"Your old friend,

"LIZZIE HAYNES."

The three children listened in silence. Then Bessie spoke.

"Oh Mother! We've seen Connie once, and she was awfully stuck-up and spoilt—and awfully curious too, sticking her nose into everything! Have we *got* to have her?"

"No, of course not," said Mother. "But I could do with some extra money, you know—and I do think that Connie might soon settle down and stop being spoilt if she lived with us. It would be good for her!"

"And I suppose we ought to help people if we can," said Jo. "All right, Mother—we'll have Connie, shall we, and just teach her not to be spoilt!"

"We shall be able to show her the Enchanted Wood and the Faraway Tree!" said Fanny.

"Yes—we used to have Cousin Dick, but now he's gone back home," said Bessie. "We'll have Connie instead! If you put a little bed into the corner of my room and Fanny's, Mother, we can have her in there."

Mother smiled at them and went indoors to write to her old friend, to say yes, she would have Connie.

The children looked at one another. "We'll soon tick Connie off if she starts any of her high-and-mighty ways here," said Bessie.

"And we'll stop her poking her nose into everything too!" said Fanny. "I say—what about taking her up the Faraway Tree and letting her peep in at the Angry Pixie? He'll soon tick her off!"

The others giggled. They could see that they would have a bit of fun with Connie. She was always so curious and inquisitive about everything and everyone. Well—she would get a few shocks in the Enchanted Wood!

"It will be fun showing somebody else the Faraway Tree, and all the people there," said Jo. "I wonder what Curious Connie will think of the Saucepan Man, and Silky and Moon-Face!"

"And I wonder what they will think of *her*!" said Bessie. "What a lovely name for her, Jo—Curious Connie! I shall always think of her like that now!"

Curious Connie was to come the next week. Bessie helped Mother put a little bed into the corner of the girls' bedroom. Connie wasn't very big. She was as old as, Fanny, but she had been very fussy over her food, and so she hadn't grown as well as she ought to. She was a pretty, dainty little thing, fond of nice clothes, and ribbons.

"Brush that untidy hair, Fanny, before you meet Connie," said Mother. Fanny's hair had grown rather long, and needed a trim.

The children went to meet the bus. "There it is!" cried Jo. "Coming round the corner. And there's Curious Connie on it, look—all dressed up as if she was going to a party!"

Connie jumped off the bus, carrying a bag. Jo politely took it from her, and gave her a welcoming kiss. The girls welcomed her too. Connie looked them up and down.

"My, you do look country folk!" she said.

"Well, that's what we are," said Bessie. "You'll look like us soon, too. I hope you'll be very happy here, Connie."

"I saw Dick the other day," said Connie, as she walked demurely along the lane with the others. "He told me the most awful stories!"

"*Dick* did! But he's not a story-teller!" said Jo, in surprise. "What sort of stories did he tell you?"

"Well, he told me about a silly Enchanted Wood and a ridiculous Faraway Tree, and some stupid people called Moon-Face and Dame Washalot and Mister Watzisname, and a mad fellow called the Saucepan Man who was deaf," said Connie.

"Oh! Do you think all those were silly and stupid?" said Jo at last.

"I didn't believe in any of it," said Connie. "I don't believe in things like that—fairies or brownies or magic or anything. It's old fashioned."

"Well, we must be *jolly* old-fashioned then," said Bessie. "Because we not only believe in the Enchanted Wood and the Faraway Tree and love our funny friends there, but we go to see them too—and we visit the lands at the top of the Tree as well! We did think of taking you too!"

"It wouldn't be much use," said Connie. "I shouldn't believe in them at all."

"What— not even if you saw them?" cried Fanny.

"I don't think so," said Connie. "I mean—it all sounds quite impossible to me. Really it does."

"Well, we'll see," said Jo. "It looks as if we'll have some fun with you, up the Faraway Tree, Connie! I should just like to see the Angry Pixie's face if you tell him you don't believe in him!"

"Let's take her tomorrow!" said Bessie, with a giggle.



"All right!" said Jo. "But we'd better not let her go into any Land at the top of the Tree. She'd never get down again!"

"What Land? At the top of the *Tree*? A land at the top of a tree!" said Connie, puzzled.

"Yes," said Bessie. "You see, the Enchanted Wood is quite near here, Connie. And in the middle of it is the biggest, tallest tree in the world—very magic indeed. It's called the Faraway Tree, because its top is so far away,

and always sticks up into some queer magic land there—a different one every week."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Connie.

"All right. Don't, then," said Fanny, beginning to feel cross. "Look—here we are, home—and there's Mother looking out for us!"

Soon Connie and the girls were unpacking Connie's bag and putting her things away into two empty drawers in the chest. Bessie saw that there were no really sensible country clothes at all. However could Connie climb the Faraway Tree in a dainty frock? She ought to have some old clothes! Well, she and Fanny had plenty so they could lend her some.

"I suppose you are longing to show Connie the Enchanted Wood!" said Mother, when they went down to tea.

"Oh—do *you* believe in it too?" said Connie, surprised that a grown-up should do so.

"Well, I haven't seen the Tree, but I have seen some of the people that come down it," said Mother.

"Look—here's one of them now!" said Jo, jumping up as he saw someone coming in at the front gate. It was Moon-Face, his round face beaming happily. He carried a note in his hand.

"Hallo!" said Jo, opening the door. "Come in and have some tea, Moon-Face. We've got a little friend here—the girl I was telling you about—Connie."

"Ah—how do you do?" said Moon-Face, going all polite as he saw the dainty, pretty Connie. "I've come to ask you to tea with me and Silky tomorrow, Connie. I hope you can come. Any friend of the children's is welcome up the Faraway Tree!"

Connie shook hands with the queer, round-faced little man. She hardly knew what to say. If she said she would go to tea with him she was as good as saying that she believed in all this nonsense about the Faraway Tree—and she certainly didn't!

"Moon-Face, you have put poor Connie into a fix," said Jo, grinning. "She doesn't believe in you, you see—so how can she come to tea with a person she doesn't believe in, at a place she thinks isn't there?"

"Quite easily," said Moon-Face. "Let her think it is a dream. Let her think *I'm* a dream."

"All right," said Connie, who really was longing to go to tea with Moon-Face, but felt she couldn't believe in him, after all she had said. "All right. I'll come. I'll think you're just a dream. You probably are, anyway."

"And I'll think *you* are a dream too," said Moon-Face, politely. "Then it will be nice for both of us."

"Well, I'm not a dream!" said Connie, rather indignantly. "I should have thought you could see quite well I'm real, and not a dream."

Moon-Face grinned. "I hope you're a good dream, and not a bad one, if you *are* a dream," he said. "Well—see you all tomorrow. Four o'clock, in my house at the top of the tree. Will you walk up, or shall I send down cushions on a rope for you?"

"We'll walk up," said Jo. "We rather want Connie to meet the people who live in the Tree. She won't believe in any of them, but they'll believe in her all right—and it might be rather funny!"

"It certainly will!" said Moon-Face, and went off, grinning again, leaving Silky's polite invitation note in Connie's small hand.

"I'm not sure I like him very much," said Connie, taking the last bun off the plate.

"What—not like *Moon-Face*!" cried Fanny, who really loved the queer little man. "He's the dearest, darlingest, kindest, funniest, nicest—"

"All right, all right," said Connie. "Don't go on for hours like that. I'll go tomorrow—but I still say it's all make-believe and pretence, and not really real!"

"You wait and see!" said Jo. "Come on—we've time for a game before bed . . . and tomorrow, Connie, tomorrow, you shall go up the Faraway Tree!"

